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Labour in Vain, or Coals to Newcastle :

151 ✓
IN A
SERMON
TO THE
PEOPLE
OF
Queen-Hith.

ECCLUS. VIII.

*Kindle not the Coals of a Sinner,
with the Flame of his Fire.*

He burnt

L O N D O N,

Printed, and Sold by *H. Hills* in *Black-
Friars*, near the *Water-side*, 1709.

1917.

1931

A
S E R M O N
TO THE
People of QUEEN-HITH.

ECCLUS. VIII. 10.

*Kindle not the Coals of a Sinner, lest thou be burnt
with the Flame of his Fire.*

SINCE our Holy Church, in her sixth Article of Religion, hath allow'd the Apocryphal Books to be read, *for Example of Life and Instruction of Manners*; I hope I shall not transgress any of her holy Rules and Ordinances, by taking a Text out of the Writings of the Son of *Syrack*, wherein many admirable Morals and wise Directions are contain'd. And as 'tis no small part of Wisdom to avoid the Temptations and Snares of Satan, who is describ'd by *Job* as *compassing the Earth* to gain the Souls of Men into a state of Apostacy from God, as the *Pharisees* are said by our Saviour to *compass Sea and Land to make Profelytes* to their Will-worship and Superstition; so 'tis a very considerable part of human Prudence to keep such a watch over themselves, that they may not be mis-led from their Duty to God or their Country, by the subtile Insinuations of crafty Men, who under specious pretences of Kindness to them, shall endeavour to draw them in to serve private Interests. This ill Design may proceed so far, as to be

ing, a great part of Human and Christian Prudence
avoid the ill Influence of such Baits as these, lest
destroy'd by the common Calamity and Misery w
they frequently bring upon whole Societies. At
this sense I apply the Text, *Kindle not the Coals of
ner, lest thou be burnt with the Flame of his Fire.*
of old reported, that an Eagle, as he was flying i
Air, saw a Burnt-offering consuming upon the A
and discern'd that the Priest, who should have atte
it, was standing at a distance: hereby he was imbol
to stoop down, and snatch a piece of Flesh from th
tar, which he soon carried to his own Nest in ord
devour it as his Prey. But so it fell out, that a b
ing Coal cleaving close to the Piece of Flesh, was
ried with it into the Eagle's Nest, which soon set
fire, and burnt it to Ashes. All Divines, both P
and Christian, have apply'd this Relation to set
the Danger of Sacrilege, by shewing, that whatso
is withdrawn from the Service or Ministry of Go
like the Coal from the Altar, a matter of dange
consequence to those who with-hold it. But if a s
sighted Eagle, who is aspiring by the Air of po
Breath to plume himself with Honours, and att
high Dignities, shall fetch Coals, tho' far from th
tar, to enflame a Neighbourhood, or kindle the
of Contention in a publick Society: every good

Now that you may the better know, my Beloved, how to avoid kindling the Coals of a Sinner, I shall endeavour,

First, To shew you the right Use of Coals, as it is set forth in Holy Scripture.

Secondly, To shew what Reasons you have to avoid joining your Assistance, when a wrong Use is made of them.

Thirdly, To make some short Application.

First, The right Use of Coals laid down in the Holy Scripture, is to teach us that we should endeavour by our Kind and Christian Behaviour to soften the Hearts of our Fellow-Creatures, tho' they should happen to be our Enemies. This is St. Paul's direction; *Rom. 12. 9, 20. Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves; but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire on his head.* And in the Verse following, heaping Coals of Fire is explain'd by overcoming Evil with Good; *Ver. 21. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome Evil with Good.* The Similitude of Coals is drawn from the Forge of a Blacksmith, who heaps Coals on the Iron which he intends to soften, and make fit to be wrought into that shape as is suitable to some good use and purpose. And in this manner, they who are kind and beneficent to their Enemies, say, by frequent Civilities and Benefactions, soften the hardness of their Hearts, and bring them to such a temper as becomes Human Nature, and the Christian profession; which is chiefly design'd to take off all roroseness and Sullenness from our Tempers, and render us affable, kind, and courteous to each other; willing to think and speak the best of one another; as comes the Sons of our Father in Heaven, who is our owner, Governor, and great Benefactor. This Application of Coals is not only laying aside all Thoughts

of Revenge ; but in returning Good for Evil, demonstrates the Loveliness of the Christian Temper. Indeed, how ingaging must it be to have Patience invincible in case of high Provocation ! to give no way to Jealousy, Suspicion, or evil Surmise, in case of Doubtfulness, or Uncertainty of another's Meaning ! The Rule of Policy is, if any thing be doubtful, always to suspect the worst ; but the height of Christian Religion is to imagine the best, and to make a good Construction, where Words and Actions incline to the contrary. This also is a noble way of over-coming a Man, to over-bear our Resentments of an injurious Action, by the Recollection of former Acts of Kindness and Courtesy.

'Tis hard measure, to wipe out the Sense of many antecedent Favours, and various Expressions of Faithfulness, because thro' some Unhappiness the Person hath been mistaken, and hath done me one Injury. A Man shou'd rather think, that the Injury now done was only accidental, not intentional. 'Tis reasonable that the Experience I have had of his former Fidelity, and many good Offices, shou'd over-bear one Failing of later date ; or suppose it was an ill Office, a real Injury which he hath done me, still let him have the Advantage of all his former Acts of Friendship : This is the way to heap Coals of Fire upon his Head, and to melt his Heart, and run it into a Christian Mould. Again, how surprizingly engaging must it be when a Person, out of his own good Nature, or in a Resentment of God's Goodness to him, or in the Consideration of the Fallibility and Frailty of human Nature, will make such Condescensions as cannot be demanded or expected ? 'Tis thus God deals with us, tho' we seldom do so to one another. How equitable is it to take the disobliging Case into Consideration ! to clothe it with all the Circumstances which belong to it, and give all Allowances to the Person concern'd, for sudden Surprizal, for invincible Ignorance, for contracted Necessity.

Necessity, for unavoidable Accident, for something which might befall him which he could not foresee, and at last to give something to the Frailty of human Nature, without any other Consideration! He, who is in this Disposition of Mind, may soften the hardest Heart, and make every one the better with whom he has to do in this World.

The Soul of Man is made capable to be wrought upon chiefly by this Compulsion; these Coals only ought to soften the Hearts of Men. *Compel them to come in, that my House may be full*, saith our Saviour, in one of his most excellent and instructive Parables. But if the Master of a Family, having provided a bountiful Entertainment for his Neighbours, should send out his Servants with Fire and Faggot, to drive his Guests to Dinner, and so compel them to partake of his Repast; this would appear to be a savage sort of Hospitality. And if Coals of this Nature have been us'd to bring Men to a Uniformity of Opinion, as useles as well as a hopeless Project, it hath only set forth the Spirit of Antichrist, and serv'd to harden by Provocation what we should soften by Kindness of Affection. But would we compel Men to participate of the heavenly Doctrine, which Christ has invited all Men to take their Fill of; let us shew forth the Loveliness of that Doctrine, by being of a pacifying, peace-making, and reconciling Spirit; by being of a tender Disposition, ready to compassionate and help Man in Misery; by being ready to hinder other Mens Sins and Harms, as well as to rejoice in God's Goodness to others, where we have no share, nor are our selves concern'd. Let us be Friends to Goodness, Vertue, Sobriety, Moderation, Temperance, and all Righteousness, where-ever we find them; not regarding the speculative Errors of those who are adorn'd with these most excellent Qualifications: for as the Truth may be held with Unrighteousness, so Righteousness may be held with Untruth. Not but that it is an admirable Quali-

ty to be communicative of Knowledge, to be ready to instruct the ignorant, to lead the Weak, and guide the Feeble in the ways of Religion: This indeed being the only Compulsion which the Soul is capable of receiving to its Advantage. And in this way God is universally good; *He maketh his Sun to shine on the Righteous and Unrighteous, Mat. 5. 45. and maketh his Rain to fall upon the Just and the Unjust.* Whereby we may discern the Baseness and Narrowness of that contracted Spirit, which can show no Kindness but to those of its own Spiritual Clan and particular Separation. What is the Church of Rome, which calls her self Catholick, but only such a peevish Separation? and such like are all other Communion, who carry their Affection no farther than to those of their own Persuasion. Universal Charity is final in Religion: Devotion in Prayer, Hearing, and receiving the blessed Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, are only means to attain that great End. And 'tis this great Christian Virtue which chiefly qualifies us to heap Coals of Fire upon the Heads of our Brethren, to mollify their Hearts, and bring them to close with us in mutual Kindnesses, tho' they should formerly have been our Enemies. And thus I have endeavour'd to set forth to you the right use of Coals, as 'tis set forth in holy Scripture.

But *Secondly*, if a wrong Use be made of Coals, viz. not tending to soften the Hearts of Men, but their Heads; to pervert the Use of their Reason and Judgment, according to what *Moses* said, *a Gift blindeth the Wise*; in this case the Counsel of the Son of *Syrack*, mentioned in the Text, may take its place, *Kindle not the Coals of a Sinner.* Agreeable hereunto is a particular Law given by *Moses*, *Exod. 23. 8. And thou shalt take no Gift; for the Gift blindeth the Wise, and perverteth the Words of the Righteous.* The Reasons of this wholesome Law of *Moses* are two: 1st. Because a Gift blindeth the Wise. 2^{dly}. Because it perverts the Words of the Righteous. Of each of them I shall discourse in their Order.

Order, because they set forth to us the intrinsecal Iniquity of partaking of Bribery, and also the pernicious Consequences which follow from thence.

1st. A Gift blindeth the Wise: Now by the Wise is meant in this Text, not a Man of any Extraordinary Foresight and Sagacity, of extraordinary great Prudence and Penetration, not a Man skill'd in all parts of Philosophical or Polite Learning, but only a Man of such a good share of common sense, as to understand his own Business according to the Circumstances of his Life, which are suited to his Condition. He knows what is fit for him to do in his Station; how to govern his Family, and keep his Servants imploy'd; how to breed up his Children in the fear of God, and provide good and profitable, and suitable Callings for them, such as their Genius will incline to. He knows Honesty to be the best Policy, whereby to thrive in his Occupation; and he has so much Love to his Country, as to wish well to its Welfare, and in his small Sphere to assist it too. He loves to see Men of Publick Spirit in Places of Publick Trust, and such he prefers in his own Choice. Such a Man as this is a wise Citizen; neither his own private Circumstances, nor the Publick, shall receive any Damage by him. So long as his Eye is single, his whole Body is full of Light; so long as his Intentions are directed by no other Motive but Justice and Honesty in his private Dealings, and by a Love to the Good of the Community of which he beareth a small share, his Wisdom will yield him sufficient Direction in all the common Circumstances of Life. But now a Gift is bestow'd upon him, which inclines him to the Favour of him who seeks to pervert his Integrity. The Gift seems to imply some noble Spirit in the Giver, and some particular Favour towards the Receiver, which being improv'd may yield future Advantages; so generous, to good a Man deserves his Assistance and Application in his behalf. He who was so good to him, how good must he needs be to the Publick!

Thus

Thus the wise Man was caught in a Snare, as Eve with Loveliness of the forbidden Fruit in Paradise which dazzled her Eyes, and deceiv'd her to her Ruin and Destruction. Thus all Bribes and Gifts been delusive to the Eyes, and perverted the Wits of otherwise very sensible Men. But that which renders this Blindness extremely criminal in those who receive Bribes, is this, that they consent willingly wilfully to the Cheat impos'd upon them; for notwithstanding the Subtilty of placing a Bribe, the Person who is design'd to be deceiv'd thereby, has it still in power to accept or refuse it. It is in his power to consider to what Ends and Purposes the Bribe is offer'd him; sometime the Design is so very openly laid, that it is to the meanest Capacity. Such a one expects that your Favour must supply the defect of his Merit, that your Gift must make Atonement for his Disability and Incapacity. And hence 'tis manifest, that the brib'd Person shuts his Eyes against the Light even of his own Judgment. *Perit judicium quoties res transit in affectum* he has shut out his Judgment, and the Judgment of others, so long as he will be govern'd only by his private Inclination. Nothing shews the irregular Freedom of the Will of Man so much, as that it has it in its power to shut out all convictions: *Etiamsi persuaseris, non suadebis.* All Arguments are lost upon a wilful Man; bring the strongest Arguments from the Comeliness of Vertue, the Charms of Honesty, the Benefit of self Profit or Advantage; or strive to awaken him out of his Golden Dream, by the dread of some imminent Publick Danger, 'tis all in vain, he will still shut his Eyes, and without considering the Premises will hold fast to his Conclusion. And herein lieth the intrinsic iniquity of admitting of Bribes, that such a one invades the Order of Nature which God has created in his Soul, and prostitutes the Divine Creation of his God to his own Ends and Purposes. 'Tis then that a Man is in the Power of himself, when the leading Faculty of his Soul, Reason

son, holds the Ballance over all his Affections with Judgment and Equity : When he can call his Memory to his Assistance, and compare what is past with those things which are present, and discern the present Designs and Circumstances by what has happened of the like nature heretofore : when the right of the Case, and the reason of the thing, shall be freely stated without any Bias or ill turn given to the plaintiff of the Case as it lies before us. Then is a Man truly in the Use of himself, when he can discern where the honest part lies, which draws the beneficial part of it in true and just proportion ; when he can discern the seeming from the real Advantage, the Private from the Re-publick ; when a Man can discern Self-love to be false and treacherous, which biases the Minds in any degree from assisting above all things the Publick-Weal, which is preferable to all other Considerations. 'Tis not every Person who can enter into these Considerations ; but yet Men of a midling Stature and Knowledge may discern the Benefit of publick Societies, and their happy Influence upon the Affairs of Private Persons : Such may know, that if the publick Fountains are poison'd, the private Cisterns, which are supply'd from them, will be of dangerous Influence. Now Bribery corrupts the very Fountain of publick Justice. How many Persons is such an Officer oblig'd to protect from Justice, who assisted him into the Seat of Honour, whereunto Justice is so closely annex'd ? A bribing Magistrate has bargain'd away in great measure, the very End and Design of his Office ; nay, he has lost the very Liberty : for he who has taken the Bribe, will neither command him, or reproach him to his Face. Thus the Giver and Receiver of Bribes have in their interests engag'd each other to mutual Slavery. Wou'd you then preserve that Liberty which God has granted you in the free Use of your Reason and Judgment, for the behoof of the publick Weal, or any other inferior Society subordinate thereunto ? Wou'd you preserve that

that share of Wisdom, which is your constant Companion and chief Assistant in all the Affairs of Life, and which in all Exigences shall be present to you as your best Bosom-Friend, Comforter and Counsellor? Wou'd you be useful, tho' but in a low Station, to the Publick Weal? Above all things, keep your Eyes open, that Blindness may not be contracted by Gifts; as you love your Eyes, avoid the Smoak of Bribery. Kindle not in this sense the Coals of a Sinner.

2dly. A Gift perverts the Words of the Righteous, i. e. corrupts his Vote as well as his Sense: let every one therefore who is engag'd in the Choice of publick Magistrates, take a view of the Qualifications of a Magistrate, such as *Moses* set forth to the People of *Israel*, *Able Men, fearing God, and hating Covetousness, &c.* The Ability of the Man falls first under Consideration. Can he discern the true Interest of his Country, or of the smaller Community to which he belongs, from false Appearances, from private, narrow, and by-Ends; from the Designs of particular Factions, wherein himself may perhaps have some by-Interest or selfish Designs? Is he so able, as to know that if he cannot do the Good he aims at, yet he will not disturb the Peace of the Society, and embarrass those Affairs which he cannot amend? Is his Eye simple, having only the publick Good in his view, not taking an Office to gain himself Esteem without Desert, or to oppress his Neighbour, and discharge his Power and Malice upon his Enemy? Has the Man an honest meaning? If so, then small Parts and Abilities will assist him in the discharge of his Duty. Was he not pragmatical in the last Office he discharg'd? Did he not shew himself over-desirous of it; but behav'd himself modestly and soberly in it, without Ostentation or making too great a Courtship to his Superiours, when at the same time he casts contempt, or took no notice of those who were below him? *Magistratus indicat virum.* A Man is try'd very much by an Office: for not only his intellectual, but his

his moral Abilities will be shewn to open view. A weak Man in an Office is laid under constant Care, and sometimes is subjected to great perplexities how to behave himself, when he meets with any case of moment, wherein the Publick may be concern'd. He has not been us'd to curious Speculations, nor has the Publick Weal taken up any share of his Thoughts. He has set his Head upon the one thing necessary, how to get Mony; but as for any other Concern, he is wholly a stranger to it. How many shifts will such a one make, to keep off from coming to the Question, lest he should betray his Ignorance and Folly. But if the Magistrate has gain'd his Office by Bribery, he will be sure to take the profitable side of the Question in any debate: *French, Turk, or Tartar*, are all alike to him; for he has been a great while out of his Mony. But,

Thirdly, To proceed to Application. And first of all, our Thanks are due to God, by whose Blessing the Citizens of this great City are in so great measure preserv'd from falling into the Snare of Bribery; so as (if we may guess the Whole by a Part) to shew their utter detestation and abhorrence of so base and foul a Crime. With what indignation was this Proposal generally receiv'd? insomuch that what *St. Paul* wrote to the *Corinthians*, may be in great measure apply'd to the Inhabitants of this Ward: *What Carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of your selves; yea, what Indignation; yea, what Fear; what vehement Desire; yea, what Zeal; yea, what Revenge! In all things ye have approv'd your selves to be clear in this matter: 2 Cor. 7. 11.* And indeed the whole City seems to resent the Injury attempted upon the Ward. So that as bad Manners administer occasion to the making of good Laws, in like manner an evil Example of one Man has stirr'd up many to exert their Virtue and Integrity, to the mutual Comfort of one another, and the Honour and Renown of this great Protestant City, the Envy of the Gates of *Babylon*, the Refuge of distressed and persecuted Christians, the Bulwark of the Reform'd Religion,

ligion, and Protector of the Liberties of *Europe*. What reason then have we to bless God the Father of all Comforts, who brought Light out of Darkness, an Order out of Confusion, that by his gracious Providence he has so order'd it, that by the Fall of one Man very many have been rais'd to a true sense of virtuous Resolutions? Let me speak one word to you, as to good Christians and honest *Englishmen*: Do you think that Magistracy, which is a Divine Ordinance, should be purchas'd by filthy Lucre? Are not honest Hearts and clean Hands the best Qualifications for it? Does the Publick Weal admit of any By-ends, any sinister Intentions? Is it not much better to be poor, and bear a good Heart to God and your Country, than to dwell in the Tents of Bribery and Ungodliness? Brown Bread and the Gospel are good Fare, and a good Conscience is a continual Feast. To conclude, Let us all thank God that a Gift did not *pervert the Words of the Righteous*.

But secondly, What measure shall be meted to him who would have *blinded the Wise with a Gift, and perverted the Words of the Righteous*? Know then, that we are not now under the Law, but under Grace; that is, under the Gospel-Dispensation of Mercy and Kindness, which in the highest measure, beyond all human Imagination, has been in the most wonderful and stupendous manner offer'd to Mankind by our Saviour Jesus Christ. Such an extraordinary Example of Iniquity, had it been given out under the Law, some Zealots would have soon appear'd to take vengeance, and turn away the Wrath of God from his People *Israel*. But we have not so learned Christ, nor does it become us to take vengeance of one another, when the best of Men are freed from Vengeance only by the Mercy of God. Let St. Paul rule our Conduct in this Case Gal. 6. 1. *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* In this sense let us heap Coals upon the head of our Brot

to burn, but (as has been said in the foregoing of this Sermon) to soften him, to mollify and him down into a good Temper; that we may him into a true Love to his Country, and to his Neighbourhood; that he may bestow that upon Charity, which was formerly otherwise intended. Therefore in this case *let us not kindle the Coals of a*; that is, let us not be too sharp and severe in owing a Sinner, for the Words of the Text bear Sense very well; but rather let us put the best construction upon the Failings of our Brother. Thus our Jesus Christ, after he had charg'd his Disciples with him, *Mat. 26. 38. Then said he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: Tarry ye and watch with me.* Yet were the Disciples so careless of this Command, that they soon forgot their Master in his great extremity; for he soon came to them, and found them fast asleep. Yet see how he kindles Coals of Fire on their Heads. He is far from aggravating their Fault, and objecting the Grossness of their Neglect upon so extraordinary occasion. He only represents their Fault to Peter without any aggravation; he saith unto Peter, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* and presently heaps Coals of Fire on their head, laying their Fault not upon the Frowardness of their Will, but on the Frailty of their Nature: *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.* In like manner let us heap Coals of Fire upon the head of the Blacksmith, and make the best construction of what has happen'd; not imputing to the Malice of his Will what may be better plac'd to the account of natural Weakness and human Frailty. The Prophet Isaiah represents the Folly of this Artificer in making an Idol by his own Labour; *Isa. 44. 10, 12. Who hath said a God, or molten a graven Image, that is profitable nothing? The Smith with the Tongs both worketh in the fire, and fashioneth it with Hammers, and worketh it with the Strength of his Arms: yea, he is hungry, and his Strength faileth;*

faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. Hereby the Prophet shews forth the great Weakness of such a mean Artificer, as to attempt a thing infinitely above his Genius to conceive. The Greatness of the Attempt shews the uncommon Impotency and Weakness of the Person. And why should it be thought a strange thing, that a Man of mean Quality and low Education, far out of the way of abstracted Thoughts or philosophical Considerations, but applying his Mind only to one thing of profitable concern to himself, should mistake the nature of such an excellent Vertue as Charity, so as to mix it with a base Allay, very unfutable to its high Dignity, in the rank of Moral or Christian Vertues? Love and Compassion to the Souls of Men, as they are our Fellow-Creatures, Partakers of the Divine Image, and Fellow-Members of the same Society, of which *Jesus Christ* is the Head, are above the thoughts of one who is always (like *Martha*) incumber'd about too many things. 'Tis a kindness to forget Miscarriages of this nature: Wherefore let him no more be nam'd to Honour or Dishonour; much less let his single Example be made use of, to cast an unkind Reflection upon this great and populous City, in which I hope God will always delight to dwell: And may he continue to counsel their Counsellors, and teach their Senators Wisdom; may he bless them with Industry, and make the Hand of the Diligent to prosper: May Truth and Justice, Unity and Order, and whatsoever things are profitable and praise-worthy, flourish and abound among them: May they be a Terror to all Tyranny and Oppression, a constant Cherisher of Liberty, and Chastiser of Licentiousness; and may the Praise thereof go forth among all Nations.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be
all Honour and Glory both now and for evermore.
Amen.*

F I N I S.

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